

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA/ARP:FMDICKMAN:LAB

APPROVED BY NEA/ARP:FMDICKMAN

COMMERCE: MR. HOSTLER

NEA/RA - MR. MONTGOMERY (SUBS)

L/NEA - MR. HUFFMAN (INFO)

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 299669

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRD, SA, BEXP

SUBJECT: BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS EXHIBITION

REF.: JIDDA 8092

JIDDA PLEASE SHOW ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

1. WASHINGTON AGENCIES ARE KEENLY AWARE OF PROBLEMS WHICH MIGHT POTENTIALLY BE RAISED IN CONNECTION WITH STAGING OF BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS EXHIBITION SCHEDULED FOR APRIL IN SAUDI ARABIA. WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY THAT IT WOULD BE UNDESIRABLE TO CANCEL THE EXHIBITION AND THAT SUCH ACTION WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS INCONSISTENT WITH OUR POLICY OF PURSUING CLOSE AND STRENGTHENED ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA.

2. ARP COUNTRY DIRECTOR DICKMAN, DEPT ASST SECY OF COMMERCE HOSTLER, AND COMMERCE'S ACTING DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL HULL CALLED ON AMBASSADOR ALIREZA DECEMBER 19 TO
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DISCUSS EXHIBITION. WE POINTED OUT THAT SOME 100 FIRMS

WERE PLANNING TO PARTICIPATE AND THAT IT WAS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO US THAT NO GROUP OF AMERICANS BE PRECLUDED FROM PARTICIPATION BECAUSE OF SAG REGULATIONS. USG OF COURSE RECOGNIZED SAG SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO DENY ENTRY TO

INDIVIDUALS IT DEEMED RISK TO ITS NATIONAL SECURITY OR WHO WERE CONSIDERED UNDESIRABLE BUT WE HOPED SAG WOULD NOT DENY VISA TO ANY US BUSINESSMAN INVOLVED IN THE EXHIBITION BECAUSE OF HIS RELIGION. IF IT APPEARED THAT A PERSON HAD BEEN REFUSED A VISA ON THESE GROUNDS, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE WOULD APPROACH THE SAUDI EMBASSY AND THE SAG TO SEEK RECONSIDERATION. IF THE APPEAL WERE REJECTED, WE HONESTLY HAD TO FACE FACT THAT THERE WOULD PROBABLY BE SOME PAINFUL POLITICAL REACTION IN US. WE HOPED THEREFORE THAT WE COULD OBTAIN ASSURANCES FROM SAG THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE A PRIORI EXCLUSION OF PERSONS INTERESTED IN THE EXHIBITION. SINCE EXHIBITION WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY BOOKED, WE HOPED THAT SAUDI EMBASSY WOULD BE ABLE TO EXPEDITE VISAS AT AN EARLY DATE SO AS TO ENSURE THAT VISA QUESTION WOULD NOT BECOME A MAJOR ISSUE.

3. AMBASSADOR ALIREZA AFFIRMED THAT SAG DOES NOT REFUSE VISAS ON RELIGIOUS GROUNDS BUT ON POLITICAL GROUNDS. HE TOO WAS INTERESTED IN SEEING THAT EXHIBITION SUCCEED, AND HE WOULD REPORT THIS APPROACH TO FOREIGN MINISTRY AND PROMISED A RESPONSE BY END OF DECEMBER. AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT IF DEPT OF COMMERCE COULD IDENTIFY LEGITIMATE PARTICIPANTS, THIS WOULD GO A LONG WAY TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM AND AVOID POSSIBLE ABUSES. HE DID STRESS THAT PERSONS APPLYING FOR VISAS WOULD HAVE TO MEET NORMAL SAUDI VISA REQUIREMENTS AND THAT NO VISA COULD BE ISSUED TO ANYONE, REGARDLESS OF RELIGION, IF HIS PASSPORT CONTAINED AN ISRAELI VISA.

4. COMMERCE OFFICIALS SAID THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO IDENTIFY INDIVIDUALS WHO WOULD BE LEGITIMATE PARTICIPANTS. KISSINGER

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